

Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services Highlights

2022-2023

This past year was a year that we worked on deepening and developing strategies to further advance our goals and missions.

Increasing relative placements- we put incentives into our contracts with our ongoing child welfare case management agencies that were activated in the beginning of 2022 to increase the use of relative placements. Relative placements are over 40% this year and we continue to try and increase those numbers. The incentive benchmarks will be increasing to 45% for calendar year 2024. Additionally, we have fewer children in out-of-home care than ever before.

We are also **working very hard to reduce our use of group care with youth.** We have established some systems-wide working groups in partnership with Casey Family Programs on a “Breaking Barriers” initiative designed to reduce our use of group care for youth. DMCPs has roughly 180 youth who are placed in group care in Milwaukee County and we are working to find small and large scale strategies to support those youth being successfully placed elsewhere- ideally back at home or in other family-like settings. We also have staff from other counties involved in our workgroups so we can collaboratively learn from each other to adopt best practices.

Building effective and supportive services both in the area of CPS intervention prevention and promoting reunification. We have been focused on really evaluating our service contracts for families and making changes to use our dollars more effectively. We created a new prevention services program last year called Stronger Families Milwaukee which identifies at-risk families who haven't yet reached the threshold for CPS formal intervention and provides them with supports and services outside of the CPS system. We are also in the process of re-procuring for services for families who have older youth they aren't sure they can manage at home to better support keeping those families together and out of the child welfare system. We are also looking at how effective our services are for families who have children in out-of-home care.

Strategic Planning for our future. We are laying out a longer-term plan to achieve our future vision within guideposts for what we want our system to look like. One of our long-term strategies to move forward our practice is to work toward ensuring that Active Efforts is the standard we are using to work toward permanency with all families, not only those with children covered by WICWA. We engaged tribal child welfare leaders in a feedback session on our plan as we worked to finalize our goals.

Keeping staff and modernizing our workforce. The workforce overall has changed significantly over the last couple of years and that is true among child welfare staff as well. We are working to become a more flexible workplace that gives people work and life balance and modernize our pay so that we can stay staffed with the best possible recruits who are focused on our mission and values. We have also collaborated with other counties who have had staffing challenges to try and support them in their work.

Continuing our strong partnership with tribes. We continue to be active participants of the Intertribal Child Welfare Directors meetings and look forward to taking time to get feedback on Milwaukee challenges and successes at those meetings.